

Transportation RFI - Interim Charge - Inquiry #1 - Covid-19 pandemic - Public input

The Committee also seeks the following information related to the COVID-19 pandemic: Inquiry 1: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected state agencies, interested parties, and the public as it relates to transportation matters?

Inquiry 1:

The Coronavirus has had a devastating effect on public transportation in the state. Local transit agencies including commuter rail and Amtrak passenger rail service within Texas have seen a precipitous drop in ridership since March 2020. That trend is now beginning to reverse course with schedules in many cities and towns starting to trend toward pre-Covid service levels.

However, Amtrak's daily intercity Texas Eagle train, which serves a number of small to mid-size towns in the state, announced that it is scaling back service from once daily to only three-times a week in October until further notice. This will leave some communities with fewer transportation options. This will impact areas with either no nearby or drastically reduced air service as well as limited or no intercity bus service. Communities that will face limited rail transportation choices include Texarkana, Marshall, Longview, Mineola, Cleburne, McGregor, Temple, Taylor and San Marcos. Amtrak does not anticipate restoring daily service until mid-2021. While the Texas Eagle service does not cater to business travel because of only one frequency a day, soon to be cut to 3x weekly, it will affect travel for seniors, the disabled, those who do not choose or can not afford to fly, those without vehicles and VA patients that use the train to obtain medical treatment in Dallas, Austin and San Antonio.

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